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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [OIF](#) [EU](#) [AU](#) [CD](#)  
SUBJECT: "MY FRIENDS, HURRY UP AND VOTE" -- THE U.S.,  
FRENCH, EU, AND OIF PRESS CHAD PARTIES TO MOVE QUICKLY TO  
NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

REF: NDJAMENA 0070

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SUMMARY  
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1. (SBU) Ambassador Nigro joined visiting French FORMIN Bernard Kouchner and EU and OIF special representatives in a forceful four-way March 14 demarche to Chad's Electoral Reform Committee, urging it to resolve problems currently blocking progress toward legislative and local elections during 2009. Taking the lead, Kouchner made clear that the international community, led by the four demarching parties, was focused closely on Chad and prepared to help the Chadians hold credible national elections on schedule. He also warned that there was a limit to international patience and interest. Opposition members of the Committee laid out three problems preventing forward movement: failure to resolve differences between Parliament and the Committee over technical changes proposed by Parliament to draft electoral laws; lack of a system of biometric identity cards; and insufficient security for countrywide campaigning. Kouchner specified that 2010 was the last acceptable timeframe for elections in Chad. He brushed aside opposition arguments as "technical problems," urging them to act as statesmen able to identify "political solutions." Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, in a subsequent meeting with Kouchner and the EU and OIF Special Representatives, said that he wanted elections this year, as specified in the August 13 Accord (see Reftel).

2. (SBU) The Ambassador and his French colleague had coordinated last week regarding U.S. participation in the joint demarche. We share in general the French, EU, and OIF analysis that while the majority party coalition and elements of the GOC may be guilty of failing to push the electoral process forward as hard as they might, at present it is certain elements of the opposition party coalition, led by Salibou Garba, who are responsible for the impasse. The OIF has offered a pair of technical experts intended as a face-saving measure for Garba and friends. But the stern nature of the demarche was Kouchner's peroration -- "Hurry up! Our patience is not ever-lasting. Hold elections in 2010 -- or else." President Deby's commitment to Kouchner and company that he expected elections in 2009, as the August 13 accord foresaw, was a very good sign, as was his expression of support for a credible CENI. Even so, we're

guessing that we'll see polling in Chad early in 2010, which is not bad by regional standards. We think that this timeframe should be accepted by friends of Chad as substantive compliance with the first of the two key goals of the August 13 Accord. END SUMMARY.

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KOUCHNER: ELECTIONS MUST BE HELD SHORTLY  
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¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Nigro joined visiting French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and EU and International Francophone Organization (OIF) special representatives in a forceful March 14 demarche to Chad's Electoral Reform Committee, urging it to resolve problems currently blocking progress toward elections later this year. Along with Kouchner and the Ambassador, at the table were EU Special Representative for Chad Georg Lennkh and OIF Special Representative for Chad Ould Lebatt. The French Ambassador, the EU Ambassador-Delegate for Chad, and the German Ambassador were also present. Around the table were four of five members of the Committee's leadership -- former president Lol Mahamat Choa, Abdrahman Djasnabaye and Brahim Koulamallah from the President's ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party, and Salibou Garba of the opposition coalition, Coalition of Political Parties in Defense of the Constitution (CPDC). (The fifth Committee Leadership member, CPDC figure Saleh Kebzabo, was absent.) The four international partners took advantage of the presence of Kouchner and Lennkh in Chad for ceremonies marking the stand-down of the EU's EUFOR PKO March 15 to coordinate a high-level approach to the Committee on the current impasse over electoral preparations.

¶4. (SBU) Taking the lead at the meeting, Kouchner told

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members of Chad's Electoral Reform Committee March 14 that the international community, especially the four international parties currently at the table, was growing tired of the Committee's continued references to "technical difficulties" as blocking the path toward scheduled elections. He recalled the degree to which France, the EU and partners including the United States had already provided technical and financial assistance in the aim of readying the nation for elections in 2009. CPDC member Salibou Garba rejoined that the CPDC's unwillingness to move forward was based on three objections: the Chadian Parliament had made changes to drafts of two key electoral laws that rendered them "unacceptable;" the general climate of political uncertainty and insecurity was hampering the ability of the opposition to campaign; and biometric ID cards were needed to prevent voter fraud.

¶5. (SBU) Kouchner pointed out that political will would be necessary to resolve differences within the Committee and between the Committee and Parliament. He noted that the OIF intended to send two legal experts to Chad by March 17 in order to break the legal and technical deadlock, adding that the international community expected this task to be accomplished "by the end of the week." He warned that international patience "was not everlasting," and that we were tired of excuses. He stressed that if Chad did not manage to hold elections by 2010 at the latest, the international community could not guarantee that unconditional support for Chad's electoral process would continue. Kouchner noted that there were competing interests for funding in locations where the will to democratize was stronger.

¶6. (SBU) The Electoral Reform Committee, officially the National Committee for the Implementation of the August 13, 2007 Accord, is charged with implementing the reforms of the Accord to enable credible communal and legislative elections in 2009 and equally credible presidential elections in 2011 (see Reftel). The Accord further recognized the need for a

new electoral code, an independent electoral commission, two national censuses, one "demographic" and the another "electoral," among other political and administrative changes. The Committee leadership is a five-person affair. Its current president is respected former President of the Republic and CPDC member Lol Mahamat Choa; its MPS members are Abdrahman Djasnabaye and Brahim Koulamallah; its CPDC members are Salibou Garba and Saleh Kebzabo.

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DEBY WANTS ELECTIONS "THIS YEAR"  
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¶7. (SBU) After the four-way demarche to the Committee, Kouchner, Lennkh and Lebatt met with President Deby to review the prior meeting. Kouchner confidante and spokesman Eric Chevallier later told Ambassador that Deby responded positively to Kouchner's description of the impasse and the need to overcome it. Chevallier said that Deby asserted he wanted the elections no later than the end of 2009, as the August 13 Accord suggested, not in 2010. Deby said further that biometrics would not be necessary, given costs in time and resources of going this route. Deby also expressed a commitment to ensuring that a "credible" independent electoral commission would be established soon.

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USG SUPPORT FOR CHAD ELECTORAL REFORM  
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¶8. (SBU) Besides political support to the EU-led negotiation of the Accord itself, our own contribution to the implementation process has been limited up to now to USDOLS 150,000 for the pre-electoral population census. We are working with USAID on providing additional assistance in the forms of (a) USDOLS 1.3 million in additional funds for the censuses, and (b) USDOLS 3 million in bridge funding for the elections themselves (whose exact use we have not yet defined).

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COMMENT

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¶9. (SBU) The Ambassador and his French colleague had coordinated last week regarding U.S. participation in the joint demarche. We share in general the French, EU, and OIF analysis that while the majority party coalition and elements of the GOC may be guilty of failing to push the process forward as hard as they might, at present it is certain elements of the opposition party coalition, led by Salibou Garba, who are responsible for the impasse. The OIF's offer of a pair of technical experts is intended as a face-saving measure for Garba and friends. But the stern nature of the demarche was Kouchner's peroration -- "My friends, hurry up! Our patience is not ever-lasting. Hold elections in 2010 -- or else." President Deby's commitment to Kouchner and company that he expected elections in 2009, as the August 13 accord foresaw, was a very good sign, as was his expression of support for a credible CENI. Even so, we're guessing that we'll see polling early in 2010, which is not bad by regional standards. We think it should be accepted by friends of Chad as substantive compliance with the first of the two key goals of the August 13 Accord. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Tripoli Minimize considered.  
NIGRO